

September 15, 2000

TO: Jim McMillan, Forest Management, Roscommon
Scott Dice, Parks and Recreation, Cadillac
Tom Rozich, Fisheries, Cadillac
Robin Pearson, Land and Mineral Services, Gaylord
Lt. Dave Davis, Law Enforcement, Gaylord
Glen Matthews, Wildlife, Gaylord
Steve Gregory, Finance and Operations Services, Cadillac
Bernie Hubbard, Forest Management, Newberry
Gary Ellenwood, Parks and Recreation, Newberry
Steve Scott, Fisheries, Newberry
Lt. Dan Polzien, Law Enforcement, Newberry
Tom Weise, Wildlife, Newberry
David Graham, Finance and Operations Services, Gaylord
Adrian Jentoft, Land and Mineral Services, Marquette
Ray Perez, Wildlife, Cadillac

FROM: Statewide Council

SUBJECT: Charges To Eco-Unit Teams

“The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the State’s natural resources for current and future generations.”

In mid-1997, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources began developing a comprehensive program to adopt a holistic resource management process. This program has been known as Joint Ventures. The primary objective is to develop strategies for sustainable resource planning and management. The core of this approach is to utilize principles of ecosystem management, application of new technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS), and implementation of adaptive management techniques to sustain the diversity and productivity of Michigan’s natural resources.

The appointment of Eco-Unit Teams to guide resource assessments, planning, and management is a significant step in implementing Joint Ventures. The mission of the Eco-Unit Teams is:

“To plan and coordinate management of Michigan’s natural resources, utilizing ecosystem management principles.”

To fulfill this mission, the Statewide Council presents the following charges to the Eco-Unit Teams:

- **Principles of ecosystem management will be utilized for planning and managing Michigan's natural resources.** The Ecological Society of America described eight elements of ecosystem management that have been endorsed by the Statewide Council:
 1. Sustainability. Ecosystem Management does not focus primarily on “deliverables” but rather regards intergenerational sustainability as a precondition.
 2. Goals. Ecosystem Management establishes measurable goals that specify future processes and outcomes necessary for sustainability.
 3. Sound ecological models and understanding. Ecosystem Management relies on research performed at all levels of ecological organization.
 4. Complexity and connectedness. Ecosystem Management recognizes that biological diversity and structural complexity strengthen ecosystems against disturbance and supply the genetic resources necessary to adapt to long-term change.
 5. The dynamic character of ecosystems. Recognizing that change and evolution are inherent in ecosystem sustainability, Ecosystem Management avoids attempts to “freeze” ecosystems in a particular state or configuration.
 6. Context and Scale. Ecosystem processes operate over a wide-range of spatial and temporal scales, and their behavior at any given location is greatly affected by surrounding systems. Thus, there is no single appropriate scale or timeframe for management.
 7. Humans as ecosystem components. Ecosystem Management values the active role of humans in achieving sustainable management goals.
 8. Adaptability and accountability. Ecosystem Management acknowledges that current knowledge and paradigms of ecosystem function are provisional, incomplete, and subject to change. Management approaches must be viewed as hypotheses to be tested by research and monitoring programs.
- **Eco-Unit Team members are responsible for communicating and implementing the cultural shift necessary for successful implementation of the Joint Ventures philosophy.** Historically, the DNR has managed the State's natural resources on a “Divisional” basis. Each Resource Division focused on the resources for which it was directly responsible. Input or impact analyses on resources managed by other Divisions occurred infrequently. New technologies, and a growing recognition by the DNR and the public that decisions impact on resources beyond those explicitly managed, have created an opportunity to apply a broader management strategy for the State's natural resources. This change in the basic culture of an agency cannot come about without the acceptance by personnel who will carry out this plan. More specifically, Eco-Unit Teams will:

1. Focus on Divisional, inter-Divisional, and stakeholder communications as a way of implementing coordinated management.
 2. Identify communication/education needs (internal and external) as part of the planning process.
 3. Identify barriers to communications that the Statewide Council can help remove.
 4. Identify public communication needs that can be integrated with other public communication strategies or work plans.
- **Eco-Unit Teams will define appropriate geographic boundaries for their Eco-Units.**
 1. It has been suggested that the boundary for the Eastern Upper Peninsula Eco-Unit be a line roughly corresponding with the western boundary of the Hiawatha National Forest. For purposes of resource assessment, planning, and management, a final boundary decision needs to be made.
 2. A decision also needs to be made on a boundary (or boundaries) for the Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP) Eco-Unit. It has been suggested that the entire NLP might be too large and diverse an area for one planning effort. The NLP Eco-Unit Team will determine the appropriate geographic scale for the Eco-Unit(s) and provide the decision and rationale to the Statewide Council. If the NLP is to be subdivided, the Team should consider appropriate boundaries such as watersheds, terrestrial ecological classifications, political boundaries, or other features.
 - **The Eco-Unit Team will be responsible for resource assessments for the Eco-Unit.** Resource assessments will be conducted at appropriate scales and at the Eco-Unit level will include assessments across all ownerships. Terrestrial resource assessment and planning will utilize the hierarchical classification developed by Albert (1994). The DNR can only conduct management on State land and aquatic resources; however, Eco-unit managers must recognize that private land management can influence state land management activities. Examples include assessments of timber resources on public and private lands, habitat for threatened and endangered species, private and public natural or reserved areas, habitat corridors, mineral resources, and other values. The Integrated Forest Management Application Program (IFMAP) provides a model for resource assessment at a variety of spatial scales.
 - **Eco-Unit Teams will be responsible for developing resource management plans for the Eco-Unit.**
 1. Eco-Unit Teams will use the prototype planning process developed for the Lake Superior State Forest in cooperation with BioForest Technologies, Inc., as a model planning process. This process will be evaluated and modified as necessary by each Eco-Unit Team. The Statewide Council must review modifications.

2. Plans for aquatic and terrestrial values may differ in geographic scale and format but must be compatible with goals and objectives developed in the planning process. Terrestrial management influences aquatic resources. Aquatic resource management impacts recreation and other values.
 3. Resource management plans may be thought of as hierarchical or layers comprising a whole. There are many scales of resource planning that must be considered when developing resource management plans. Other plans to consider may range from regional plans such as the Lake Area Management Plans to globally significant species recovery plans to site-specific management requirements for wolf denning sites and raptor nests.
 4. Each Division's annual operational plans (e.g. annual timber harvest, habitat management, species management, mineral management, etc.) will be compatible with the Eco-Unit's resource management plan.
- **The Eco-Unit Teams will determine a reasonable time frame for development of resource management plans.** Planning will not be delayed because of "incomplete" resource assessments. There is never "enough" information. However, because of the dynamic nature of the planning process, adaptations can be made as necessary.
 - **Eco-Unit Teams will operate as self-directed work teams.**
 1. If an Eco-Unit Team member has concerns about a Division-specific issue or policy, clarification should be obtained from an appropriate Division staff member, e.g. Field Coordinator or Program Specialist.
 2. If a Team has concerns about policies or issues that span Divisions or Eco-Units, they should go to the Statewide Council for clarification or guidance.
 - **Existing laws, policies, and Division's goals and objectives will determine Eco-Unit Teams' management authority. However Eco-Unit Teams are encouraged to recommend improvements.**
 - **Each Eco-Unit Team will select a Team leader and representative to the Statewide Council.** Each team will determine the appropriate time frame for serving in these positions. The same or different individuals can hold these positions.
 - **Eco-Unit Teams need to have linkages to Division staffs and Management Teams.** Divisions may need to assign a staff member (such as Field Coordinator or Staff Planner) to serve as a liaison between staff and the Eco-Unit Team. Divisions not having direct involvement in the process (Human Resources, Internal Audit, Legal Services, or Information Services) may appoint a contact person to maintain communications with the Eco-Unit Teams.

- **Eco-Unit Teams are responsible for distributing information to keep the DNR and the public informed about their activities.** Teams will develop a communications strategy for sharing information and updating Department personnel and stakeholders on Team activities. Teams should work closely with Information Services on communication strategies.
- **Eco-Unit Teams are responsible for identifying training needs. The Department Training Officer and Division Training Officers shall be kept apprised of training needs.** Funding training will generally be worked into Division budgets.
- **Eco-Unit Teams will utilize existing staff to the greatest extent possible for resource assessment and planning.** Wildlife and Forest Management Divisions will both have permanent staff assigned to support the Eco-Unit Team. The Eco-Unit Team will be responsible for work assignments and can assign tasks to any employees in the Eco-Unit through the respective Division's team member. For instance, there may be instances where information is needed on fire management, forest health, or threatened and endangered species that can be imported from existing field staff. There may be other instances where specialized skills and information need to be imported from outside agencies. Each Team member will work with Division staff to resolve employee time and workload issues required for resource assessment and planning.
- **Eco-Unit Teams will utilize the current process for requesting services from the Spatial Information Resource Center.** If issues arise that cannot be resolved by the ViGIL Board, the Statewide Council will resolve them.
- **The Eco-Unit Teams will work with Finance and Operations Services Bureau to ensure that clerical support is available for the Eco-Unit Team.** This could be a significant time consumer for clerical support staff. Meeting minutes need to be recorded and distributed, mailing lists maintained, meetings arranged, etc. Do not underestimate the importance of clerical support.
- **Each Division will allocate funding for Eco-Unit Teams based on each Division's annual work plans.** This is the same as the current work planning/budget process. There may be instances where there is a need for shared expenses not covered by each Division's budget allotments. Requests for these funds should be directed to the Statewide Council.
- **Eco-Unit Teams will provide the Statewide Council a plan for implementing these charges by May 1, 2001.** The Canadians use "Terms of Reference" for this process, and the EUP developed a draft that could be shared with the NLP.

The Michigan DNR is one of the first state agencies in the country to undertake an integrated ecosystem approach to resource planning and management on such a large scale. We expect the process to be adaptive and innovative. The Eco-Unit Teams are not expected to develop identical assessment and planning processes, but they must be based on the concepts of resource sustainability, incorporate the elements of ecosystem management, and be a fully open and participative public process. The Council recognizes that these charges will raise additional questions, and there is no blueprint for success. The Statewide Council looks forward to working with the Eco-Unit Teams to resolve outstanding issues and plan for the sustainable management of Michigan's natural resources.

RAH:mb